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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1463
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 0917
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0325
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0370
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
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RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KARACHI 000398

SIPDIS

REF: KARACHI 330

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [KCRS](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: BALOCHISTAN - CONFLICT BETWEEN BALOCH SEPARTISTS AND
GOVERNMENT FORCES CONTINUES TO THREATEN STABILITY OF PROVINCE

Classified by: Acting Consul General Mary Elizabeth Madden, Reasons
1.4 b and d

11. (C) Summary. The 25 October assassination of Balochistan Education Minister Shafiq Ahmed Khan and the 18 October grenade attack upon Provincial Information Minister Yonous Mullahzai represent the continuation of an ongoing Baloch separatist campaign of intimidation and targeted killings. These separatists hope to reduce the writ of the Government of Pakistan in Balochistan and to exploit a widening rift between the Government and the people. Far from satisfied with government reconciliation efforts, these groups have been systematically broadening their list of targets, and sources warn that violence will continue to escalate for the foreseeable future. The ongoing conflict has had a noticeable effect on the quality of life for the people of Balochistan and has created an opportunity for third parties, especially the Pashtun, to exploit the situation for property and business gains. End Summary.

12. (C) The 25 October assassination of Balochistan Education Minister Shafiq Ahmed Khan is another example of Baloch Separatist's ongoing campaign of targeted killings against government officials and Punjabi "settlers." Khan was known throughout Balochistan as a vocal supporter of the Government of Pakistan and was responsible for several educational initiatives that were perceived as anti-Baloch. Individuals associated with the separatist groups openly cited his "anti-Baloch" policies, including the closure of colleges throughout Balochistan and the relocation of all Punjabi teachers to Quetta, as the rationale for his assassination.

13. (C) Although tensions have historically been high in Balochistan, the current wave of violence can be differentiated from previous insurgencies by the participation and leadership of the Bugti tribe, a numerically significant and politically influential tribe that has historically avoided armed conflict with the Pakistani Government. The Bugtis were drawn into the current conflict when widespread unrest over the exploitation of the Sui Gas fields in Dera Bugti was met by a staunch crack down at the hands of security forces. Initially targeted killings were mainly directed against security, police, and intelligence forces. After the killing of Akbar Bugti in 2006, the separatists began targeting settlers or non-Baloch who were believed to be directly associated with the Government, such as teachers, as well as groups believed to support the Intelligence Services, notably barbers who are believed to be the eyes and ears of the GoP in Balochistan. (Note: Post's FSNI media analysis indicates that there have been at least six people killed in attacks against

professors and school administers since September.)

¶4. (C) Sadiq Raisani, Spokesman for the separatist Baloch Nationalist Front, said that these attacks are part of an ongoing strategy of Baloch separatist groups to retaliate against increased Government operations in Balochistan and continued dissatisfaction with the GoP.

This strategy is intended to bring international attention to the Baloch separatist movement and to isolate individuals who support or otherwise sympathize with the Government of Pakistan. He claimed that these groups have been gradually escalating their use of violence in Balochistan and that the Baloch separatist groups are positioning themselves to enter a third, more deadly phase of this operation. This phase will expand the pool of targets to include anyone associated with the government establishment. There have been some indications that this new phase of the operation is underway and that separatist groups are beginning to target Pashtun and even Baloch citizens who are either pro-government or unwilling to support separatist causes. A recent example is the October 15 grenade attack against Younous Mullahzai, the Provincial Information Minister and a Baloch. However, Mullahzai told PolStaff that the police were still investigating the incident and that it was too early to determine who was ultimately responsible for the attack.

¶5. (C) University campuses have become ground zero in the conflict between the GoP and Baloch separatists groups. Student groups are widely believed to support militant organizations and the current insurgency has its roots in social unrest at educational institutions. In response to this ongoing unrest, security forces have begun routinely shutting down educational institutions and have been arbitrarily singling out groups of students for arrest and interrogation. Unrest has resulted in most colleges and universities

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being shut down over the past seven months, effectively crippling the higher education system in Balochistan.

¶6. (C) Meanwhile, this conflict has had a significant effect on the day to day life of the citizens of Balochistan. Native Baloch residents have begun to disassociate themselves from non-Baloch groups and from being affiliated with government forces for fear of being targeted. At the same time, Punjabi and other "settler" groups have begun to migrate away from Balochistan while Pashtun groups have been purchasing the property and businesses they leave behind. There have also been reports that certain Pashtun elements have started to exacerbate the situation by threatening settlers themselves and attributing these threats to Baloch nationalist groups (Reftel).

¶7. (C) The Government of Pakistan has focused its efforts on addressing Baloch complaints of socio-economic inequality, while ignoring demands for greater political autonomy or independence. The recently announced Balochistan package and increased National Finance Commission (NFC) award for the province are seen by the federal government as attempts to address socio-economic inequalities. Baloch, particularly those with separatist leanings or those involved in the insurgency, see the government's financial incentives as "too little, too late," and fear that much of the increased assistance will benefit a handful of individuals in the provincial government - and the leaders of the tribes allied with it - rather than the citizenry at large. In the past, the government has generally resolved issues in Balochistan through increasing payments to tribal leaders in exchange for cooperation with the government. The current insurgency and separatist sympathies, however, appear to have spread to urban areas and middle-class students and professionals that are only tangentially affiliated with tribal leaders, making the government's traditional approach largely futile.

¶8. (C) Comment: Post continues to monitor the deteriorating security situation in Balochistan with concern. While outside support to the Baloch insurgency from Indian intelligence and its agents in southern Afghanistan is plausible, the escalation of violence in Balochistan can be chiefly attributed to indigenous separatist elements. If the federal government is unsuccessful in addressing the economic and political concerns of the Baloch middle class, the insurgency threatens to further alienate the GoP from the people of Balochistan, eroding the GoP's writ in the province. Of additional concern is that this conflict has created ungoverned space that outside

elements, such as militant forces fleeing ongoing operations in Afghanistan and Waziristan, are capable of exploiting. To date, the Baloch insurgency remains a secular movement vigorously opposed to the religious ideology of Taliban/al-Qaeda elements and has not found common cause with that movement. However, as the conflict with the government goes forward, it is possible that approaches by Taliban/al-Qaeda for safehaven may become more attractive to Baloch insurgents.

MADDEN